



Annual Complaints Report

2015 - 2016



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1. Introduction

Complaints are a very important source of information about our customers' views regarding the quality of services provided by DVA. All formal complaints received have been fully investigated through the Agency's complaints procedure. All staff are encouraged to respond to concerns raised by customers as soon as they become aware of them, rather than waiting to receive a formal written complaint.

Complaints represent the feelings of real people, who have real experiences of receiving services from us, and telling us what that service was like.

We received 388 formal complaints in 2015-16, 185 informal complaints and, notably, 146 compliments from our customers.

For an Agency that delivered over 1 million vehicle tests, issued 295,291 driving licences, conducted 58,574 driving tests, and handled over 174,692 enquiries, the number of complaints we received in 2015-16 is not significant, in terms of its ratio to the transactions conducted.

This report provides statistical information on the number of complaints we received, our performance in handling those – in terms of timeliness and also our effectiveness in persuading complainants that they did not need to escalate the complaint to the next stage – and an insight into how our many customers perceive our level of service.

The complaints also provide real opportunities for us to improve our internal processes and how we serve those customers.

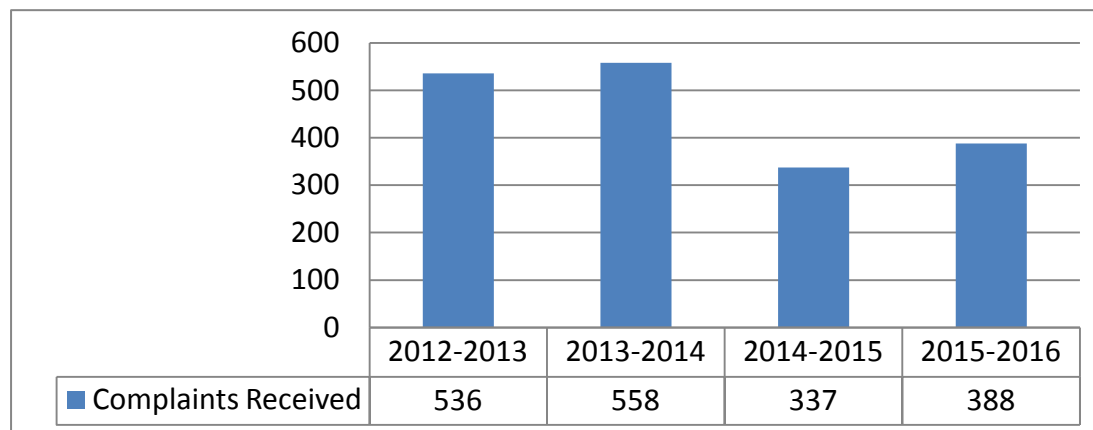
Reports about complaints are discussed at Senior Management level within the Agency on a regular basis.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide assurance that the Agency operates a robust and accessible complaints procedure when investigating and responding to formal complaints;
- Show evidence that complaints and lessons learned from complaint investigations have been used to improve the quality of service to citizens during the year; and
- Provide statistics about the nature of complaints received.

2. Complaints Summary

During this reporting year (April 2015 to March 2016) DVA received and dealt with a total of 388 formal complaints. This figure represents an increase of 15.13% on the previous year (337 complaints received 2014-15).



Complaints Outcomes

Year	Total	Complaints			
		Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Withdrawn
2015-16	388	115 (29.7%)	40 (10.3%)	224 (57.7%)	9 (2.3%)
2014-15	337	113 (33.5%)	39 (11.6%)	176 (52.2%)	9 (2.7%)
2013-14	558	184 (33%)	53 (9.5%)	321 (57.5%)	0 (0.0%)
2012-13	536	121 (22.6%)	51 (9.5%)	357 (66.6%)	7 (1.3%)
2011-12	472	115 (24.2%)	30 (6.4%)	323 (68.4%)	4 (0.8%)

Of the 115 Upheld complaints, 103 complaints were resolved at Stage 1, 9 complaints at Stage 2 and 3 complaints at stage 3. The three main work areas involved are as follows;

- 29 of these complaints, equal to 24.8% involved damage to vehicles whilst undergoing MOT tests.
- 19 complaints, equal to 16.6%, related to Vehicle Test outcomes.
- 11 complaints, equal to 9.6%, were related to the Booking Services and in particular the online functionality of cancelling or rescheduling tests.

3. Performance against Target

Target	Outcome	Actual 2013-2014	Actual 2014-2015	Actual 2015-2016
To respond to 95% of complaints within 10 working days	ACHIEVED	99.3%	99.7%	99.2%

This high level of performance has been achieved by:

- a robust complaints procedure;
- an effective Customer Services monitoring role; and

4. Complaints Missing Target

Centre/Office Involved	Total No. Which Missed Target	Reason
Belfast Test Centre	1	Stage 1 missed target due to the examiner not being available to give his account until after the due date.
Londonderry Test Centre	1	Complaint response missed target at Stage 3.
Mallusk Test Centre	1	Complaint response missed target at Stage 3.
Total	3	

N.B. Whilst the Belfast Test Centre complaint missed the 10 working day target, a holding reply was issued to inform the complainant that there would be a delay in the full response. However, as the information required to reply to the customer was within our control, the complaint will be marked as having missed the target.

5. Complaints Breakdown

The table below lists the Business Area where formal complaints were received and a breakdown of the reasons for 2015-16 formal Complaints can be found at Appendix 9.

Section	Total
Test Centres	195
Driver Licensing	89
BSP Booking Services	46
Theory Test	20
Enquiries	17
Other	21
TOTAL	388

The most notable increase in complaints was in relation to the Booking Services Programme (BSP), which customers use to book, cancel or amend vehicle and driving tests. There was a 187.5% rise from 16 complaints in 2014-15 to 46 complaints in 2015-16. 63% of these complaints were in relation to the ability to cancel or reschedule test appointments online, not receiving confirmation of bookings or reminders for MOT tests and conflicting information for appointment dates.

N.B. The BSP team confirmed that there were no major issues that could explain the increase in complaints for the booking system.

Complaints as a percentage of transactions

Enquiries - During this reporting cycle the total number of calls answered by the Agency Enquiries team was 149,853, and the total number of emails responded to by Enquiries was 24,839. This gives a total of 174,692 Enquiries transactions. The 17 complaints received regarding Enquiries equates to 0.009% of customer interactions (i.e. 1 per 10,276).

Driver Licensing - The total number of driver licences issued during this reporting cycle was 295,281. The 89 driving licence complaints received equates to 0.03% of transactions processed. (i.e. 1 per 3,318)

Vehicle Testing - The total number of vehicle test appointments provided during this reporting cycle was 1,075,386. The 188 complaints attributable to vehicle tests equate to 0.017% of tests conducted (i.e. 1 per 5,720).

Driver Testing - The total number of driving test appointments provided during this reporting cycle was 58,574. The 70 complaints relating to driving tests equates to 0.12% of tests conducted (i.e. 1 per 837).

Compliance and Enforcement - Given the nature of the work conducted by Compliance and Enforcement, it is not a simple process to calculate the number of transactions it undertook. However, the total number of complaints received in respect of our Compliance and Enforcement work was 8.

A detailed analysis of complaints, broken down by business area, can be found in appendices 1 - 8.

6. Complaints Procedure

We operate a three stage complaints procedure.

The objective is to deal as thoroughly as possible with the complaint at Stage One, and thereby minimise the customer's perceived need to take it any further. This, of course, is not always possible.

If a complainant has made a formal complaint and is not satisfied with the response at Stage One, he may request that it be escalated to Stage Two.

If the complainant is still not satisfied with the response at Stage Two, he may again request that it be escalated to stage 3¹. At this stage, the response must be signed off by the Chief Executive.

Should, the complainant remain unhappy, after the three stages of the Complaints Procedure have been used, he may take the matter to the Assembly Ombudsman ²for Northern Ireland.

In 2015-16, of the 388 complaints received, 9 (2.32%) were withdrawn. Of the remaining 379 complaints, 327 (86.28%) complaints were completed at Stage One, 38 (10.03%) complaints were completed at Stage Two, with the remaining 14 (3.69 %) being completed at Stage Three. No cases were referred to the Ombudsman.

¹ We took advice from the Assembly Ombudsman's Office about the escalation process. Their advice was that the complaints procedure is an appeals process in its own right. This means that the complainant need only express dissatisfaction with the response, and does not have to produce new evidence for the complaint to move to the next stage.

² On 1 April 2016, Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman replaced the Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Breakdown of Complaints Escalated to Stage Two

Nature of Complaint	Total
Test Outcome	8
Attitude of Staff	6
Admin Procedures / Legislation	5
Length of Time to Produce a Licence /Errors on Licence / Loss of Documents	6
Customer Service/ Queuing Times/ Efficiency of Response/ Waiting	5
Other	8
Total	38

Of those complaints escalated to Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure, 9 (23.68%) were Upheld.

Breakdown of Complaints Escalated to Stage Three

Nature of Complaint	Total
Test Outcome	5
Attitude of Staff	3
Legislation	2
Length of Time to Process Licence and Return of ID Documents	3
Booking System	1
Total	14

Of those complaints escalated to Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure, 3 (21.43%) were Upheld.

Upon closer analysis of the complaints that progressed to Stage 2 and 3 we found no correlation between the nature of the complaint and the outcome of the complaint.

7. Complaints to the Assembly Ombudsman

During this reporting cycle no complaints were escalated to the Ombudsman.

8. Customer Feedback

We conducted a small survey to evaluate the effectiveness of our complaints process, from the perspective of those who had used it. As recommended by the Customer Service Excellence® assessor we issued surveys to both those who had an Upheld and Not Upheld outcome.

Of the 388 complaints received, 100 surveys were issued, representing a 25.8% sample. Of these surveys 3, (3%) were returned.

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied Nor dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Total
The way the complaint was handled.	1		1		1	3
Someone taking responsibility for sorting out your complaint.	1	1		1		3
The time taken to sort out your complaint.	1	1			1	3
The follow up contact you received.	1		1	1		3
The clarity of the response	1		1	1		3
The eventual outcome of your complaint.	1				2	3
Overall Result	33.33%	11.11%	16.67%	16.67%	22.22%	

We have looked at the nature of the initial complaints raised by these 3 respondents and there is no correlation between the outcome of the complaint and the level of satisfaction.

9. Improvements

Our complaints process challenges us to learn from the complaints received, identify areas where repeated problems are occurring and take steps to improve our service.

In 2015-16 the following improvement was implemented:

Issue	Suggestion for Improvement	Progress
CSE highlighted that those selected for the Feedback Survey were taken from the 'Complaint Upheld' outcome category only.	The feedback survey should also be sent to a sample of those who had a Not Upheld outcome.	The 2015-16 Feedback Survey sample size was increased to include those who had a Not Upheld outcome.

Improvements in 2016-17

In an effort to achieve a higher completion rate and more current feedback from complainants, we will issue a short questionnaire each quarter to a sample of complainants who have had their complaint responded to in that quarter. This will enable us to consider any suggestions or feedback and implement any improvements more quickly.

10. Informal Complaints

An informal complaint can be described as an expression of dissatisfaction from a customer, which he chooses to raise at the point of service, but not formally in writing. These are generally handled on the spot by a manager.

In 2015-16, 185 informal complaints were received. This is a 17.41% decrease from the previous year.

The 2 main reasons for informal complaints were 'Test Outcome', which attracted 86 complaints (46.49%), and 'Attitude of Examiner or Staff/ Customer Service/ Conduct of Test' which attracted 52 complaints (28.11%). The number of informal complaints received by Test Centre can be found at Section 13, whilst a detailed breakdown of the 2015-16 informal complaints can be found at Appendix 10.

11. Compensation Payments

There are a number of instances where it is necessary for the Agency to pay compensation to customers.

Ex-gratia Payments

Occasionally DVA will make ex-gratia payments to customers. These are payments made when there is no obligation or liability to make this payment. In essence these are goodwill payments. In this reporting period there were 19 ex-gratia (Driver Licensing) complaints/payments, with a total associated cost of £618.17. This was an increase of 3 complaints and £334.40 on the 2014-15 numbers.

Reason	Total
Replacement of lost documents or photographs	5
Costs associated with completion of forms / medical examinations which were not required	7
Postage Costs	7
Total	19

Tests Cancelled by Agency

If a vehicle or driving test is cancelled by the Agency for any reason within the Agency's control and the period of notification is less than the stipulated period of 1 clear working day for vehicle tests and 3 clear working days for driving tests, the customer is refunded 50% of their test fee and receives a rescheduled appointment.

During the 2015-16 year, 107 Driving Tests and 863 Vehicle Tests were cancelled. This is an increase of 240% on the 2014-15 cancelled tests total.

These cancelled tests resulted in compensation payments totaling **£18,730.00**

The 863 cancelled Vehicle Tests equates to 0.08 % of tests conducted (i.e. 1 in 1246 tests).

The 107 cancelled Driving Tests, equates to 0.18 % of tests conducted (i.e. 1 in 547 tests).

The increase in the number of cancelled Vehicle Tests was largely due to a system failure/fault at all test centres during December 2015 and again in January 2016, these accounted for 65% of all Vehicle Test cancellations.

A full breakdown of 2015-16 Cancelled tests by Test Centre can be found at section 13 and the reasons for cancellation can be found in Appendices 11 and 12.

Damage to Vehicles

If damage is caused to a customer's vehicle and the Agency is found to be negligent, compensation may be applicable.

For 2015-16, 32 incidents of damage to vehicles were recorded and 31 complaints were upheld. This is an increase of 25 % on the number of incidents reported during the 2014-15 year.

This resulted in a total cost to the Agency of £20371.33.

The 31 incidents of damage to vehicles that were upheld equates to 0.002% of vehicles tests conducted (i.e. 1 in 34,690 vehicles tests.)

The table below lists the reasons for damage caused to vehicles in 2015-16.

Reason	2015-16 Reporting Year
Damage to vehicle due to collision with testing equipment	7
Vehicle damaged when being jacked / lifted	7
Damage to boot	2
Other	15
Total	31

12. Compliments received from customers

Section	Total
Test Centres	84
Driver Licensing	14
Enquiries	41
PLTD	4
Vehicles	1
DVA Communications	1
Freedom of Information Request	1
TOTAL	146

13. Lessons Learned

In recent times our complaints procedure has been comprehensively reviewed and indeed commended as good practice, following an independent review as part of our Customer Service Excellence[®] assessment. We have also liaised with the Assembly Ombudsman to ensure that we follow good practice guidance in handling complaints.

Our procedures are at an advanced stage of maturity, having been reviewed and benchmarked consistently over recent years.

From the analysis of the statistics provided, we have learned that the volume of complaints received, whilst never acceptable, is not unreasonable, nor is it a major cause of concern, given the nature of our work, and the volume of transactions we have with citizens.

Nonetheless, we remain determined and willing to listen to the views of our customers and open to the possibility of introducing improvements to our processes, and ensuring that we make our complaints procedure both accessible and easy to use.

In an effort to ensure that we receive meaningful and timely feedback from as many complainants as possible, we will issue a satisfaction survey to all customers who formally complain, x months after we have responded to their complaint. This will hopefully generate more responses than we currently receive, and will provide feedback on our complaint handling service based on very recent customer experience.

14. At a Glance Guide for Test Centres

Test Centre	Tests conducted ³	Formal Complaints	Informal Complaints	Compliments received	Incidents of vehicle damage	Compensation Payments	Vehicle Tests Cancelled	Driving Tests Cancelled
Armagh	53,045	3	2	0	2	40	36	2
Ballymena	81,395	13	10	1	3	122	87	29
Belfast	116,138	31	24	7	5	93	79	4
Coleraine	72,856	15	6	1	1	105	67	0
Cookstown	69,185	7	15	1	2	65	56	6
Craigavon	69,493	13	6	4	3	88	80	3
Downpatrick	45,074	6	3	4	1	36	33	0
Enniskillen	51,286	3	9	2	0	67	60	7
Larne	47,857	13	15	8	2	78	57	15
Lisburn	73,734	11	11	35	0	84	70	9
Londonderry	81,543	24	20	7	0	50	32	10
Mallusk	86,812	12	21	1	1	81	77	0
Newry	80,822	12	13	7	3	59	29	22
Newtownards	117,763	26	5	4	6	59	51	0
Omagh	49,324	6	25	1	2	59	49	0

³ Vehicle and driving tests

15. APPENDICES - Detailed breakdown of complaints by Business Area

Appendix 1 – Driver Licensing

Section	2015 - 2016 Reporting Year
Correspondence Team	48
Medicals / Vocational	27
Tachos	4
Data Input / Cash	3
Foreign Licence	3
Other	4
TOTAL	89

Drivers - Correspondence Team

Administration Procedures / Policy	11
Length of Time Taken to Issue Licence	11
Insufficient / Quality of Service	10
Errors on Licence	6
Other	10
TOTAL	48

Drivers - Medicals Vocational

Length of Time to Produce a Licence	15
Administration Procedures / Policy	8
Insufficient / Quality of Advice Provided	2
Errors on Licence	1
Accuracy of Records	1
TOTAL	27

Post Team

Lost Documents	2
TOTAL	2

Drivers - Data Input / Cash

Errors on Licence	2
Customer Service	1
TOTAL	3

Drivers - Court Section

Length of Time to Produce a Licence	1
TOTAL	1

Drivers - Scanning Card production

Errors on Licence	1
TOTAL	1

Drivers - Foreign Licence

Administration Procedures / Policy	2
Length of Time to Produce a Licence	1
TOTAL	3

Drivers - Tachos

Length of Time to Produce a Licence	1
Loss of Documents	1
Errors on Licence	1
Other	1
TOTAL	4

Appendix 2 – Test Centres (including main reasons for complaints)

Centre	2015 - 2016 Reporting Year	Test outcome	Damage to vehicle	Attitude of staff
Armagh	3	0	2	1
Ballymena	13	4	4	3
Belfast	31	5	5	5
Coleraine	15	8	1	1
Cookstown	7	1	2	2
Craigavon	13	7	4	3
Downpatrick	6	1	1	2
Enniskillen	3	1	0	0
Larne	13	4	2	2
Lisburn	11	2	0	5
Londonderry	24	9	1	7
Mallusk	12	4	3	4
Newry	12	5	3	3
Newtownards	26	9	7	5
Omagh	6	2	2	0
TOTAL	195	62	37	43

Appendix 3 – Booking Services

Breakdown	
Booking Procedure	43
Administration Procedures	2
Attitude/ Conduct of Staff	1
TOTAL	46

Appendix 4 – Telephone Enquiries

Breakdown	
Attitude/ Conduct of Staff	6
Admin Procedures and Policy	4
Queuing Time	4
Insufficient Advice	1
Message System	12
TOTAL	17

Appendix 5 – Compliance & Enforcement

Breakdown	
Attitude/ Conduct of Staff	7
Admin Procedures and Policy	1
TOTAL	8

Appendix 6 – Theory Testing

Breakdown	
Not permitted to take test due to licence issues	6
Booking difficulties	4
Attitude/ Conduct of Staff	3
Test Outcome	3
Other	4
TOTAL	20

Appendix 7 – ADI / AMI

Breakdown	
Customer Service	1
TOTAL	1

Appendix 8 – Operators – Passenger Service

Breakdown	
Admin Procedures and Policy	4
Length of time to process application	1
Loss of Documents	1
TOTAL	6

Appendix 9 – Breakdown of Formal Complaints across DVA

Reason	Complaints
Decision of Test	71
Maladministration/ Administration Procedures/ Policy / Legislation	41
Attitude/Conduct of staff	52
Loss of Documents / Error on Licence / Length of Time to Produce a Licence	48
Customer Service / Speed of Response /Quality of Advice/ Service Provided	39
Damage Caused During Test	37
Booking Systems/ Process/ System Limitations	35
Other	65
Total	388

Appendix 10 – Breakdown of Informal Complaints

Reason	Complaints
Test Outcome	86
Attitude of Examiner or Staff/ Customer Service / Conduct of Test	52
Procedures / Policy / Legislation	13
Damage to vehicle during test	11

Unable to Contact Test Centre by Phone	11
Other	12
Total	185

Appendix 11 – Vehicle Test Cancellations

Reason	2015-2016 Reporting Year
System failure / fault	565
Server failure	137
Electrical Fault	64
Brake Testing Equipment / Brake rollers failure	60
Server / BSP failure	24
Other	13
Total	863

Appendix 12 – Driving Test Cancellations

Reason	2015-2016 Reporting Year
Examiner Not Available / Examiner Illness	106
Booking Error (BSP)	1
Total	107

Appendix 13 – Damage to Vehicles by Centre

Centre	Number of Incidents	Total Cost
Armagh	2	£ 596.00
Ballymena	3	£ 1495.13
Belfast	5	£ 2605.26
Coleraine	1	£ 36.55
Cookstown	2	£ 531.49
Craigavon	3	£ 2958.22
Downpatrick	1	£ 6109.09
Larne	2	£ 1586.96
Mallusk	1	£ 462.00
Newry	3	£ 972.88
Newtownards	6	£ 2172.07
Omagh	2	£ 845.68
Total	31	£ 20371.33